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**THE CROSS OF CHRIST  
IN THE MAGISTERIUM  
OF JOHN PAUL II (1978-1992)**

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## INTRODUCTION

The authentic understanding of the Cross of Christ, as is reflected in the teaching of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, is much more than a mere system of thought or study of abstractions; much less is it an individual's personal opinion or hypothesis. It is an aperture through which we are enabled to arrive at a deeper understanding of the Son of God. Through Him we are consequently enabled to know the Father who sent Him, and the Holy Spirit who was sent as the result of the Son's departure via the Cross<sup>1</sup>. As we deepen our knowledge of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, we at once deepen our knowledge of the divine nature as well as our own mysterious human nature. In coming to better know the triune God we are consequently enabled to love Him likewise more completely. The same can be said with respect to our humanity: as we come to understand our sublime nature better, the more we are enabled to *love our neighbor as our self* (Lev 19: 1; Mt 22: 39; Mk 12: 31; Lk 10: 29-37; Jas 2: 8). Christ alone is our aperture to both divinity and humanity.

The Holy Father, clearly reflecting the light of traditional doctrine, most notably that of the Second Vatican Council, has given us a presentation of the true teaching of the Cross. The theme is of crucial importance as the Church approaches Her second millenium. This is because it is the quintessential message of hope, a hope that the Church herself, as well as all mankind, is in dire need of in today's suffering world.

The Cross is the one truly demonstrable reason the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1: 14)<sup>2</sup>. The Cross is indeed the crossroads where all roads converge. It is the one place toward which the sons of Adam can look with confidence if they do not know God nor themselves; if they know not the meaning of their life, their pain, nor their death.

The Cross's message of hope, the message of John Paul II, speaks to us of a Father who is manifested to us as merciful love

in the Person of His only Son crucified. *Our hope is in the Lord who made heaven and earth, and we shall never hope in vain*, for this merciful Lord wills that not one of these little ones should ever be lost who believe in the Son crucified and risen.

The crucifixion of the Son of God is likewise the perfect affirmation of the truth, because the Truth himself, He who is true God and true Man, accomplished it, and because the truth is nothing other than humility as St. Teresa of Avila often said.

This humility manifested itself perfectly when Jesus *though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross* (Phil 2: 6-8).

The schema which we have used seeks to reflect the principal facets of the teaching of the Cross found in John Paul II's magisterium from its inception through the end of 1992. The Holy Father's *Trinitarian Trilogy* of *Dives in misericordia*, *Redemptor hominis*, and *Dominum et vivificantem* constitutes a major part of his teaching with respect to the truth of Redemption, and, hence, of this work as well. The specific Redemption oriented themes which the Holy Father has written quite at length about, such as *the meaning of Christian suffering*, *the Mother of the Redeemer*, *the pain of God* —which we see especially in *Dominum et vivificantem*— and the sacrificial dimension of the priesthood have contributed significantly to the determination of the schema of this work.

The true teaching of the Cross —the heart of the Paschal mystery— is at the heart of authentic Christian theology. If Redemption can be said to reside at the height of divine Revelation, the Cross surely is situated solidly and triumphantly at the summit of the theology of Redemption. If the Eucharist is in effect *the source, the center, and the summit of Christian life*, as the Council clearly taught, then surely the Cross is of major importance since it is at the very core of the Eucharistic mystery. The Cross speaks of the life and mission of Jesus Christ, and his Church with which He is one. The Cross was His destiny when He entered time and space and it is His legacy to the Church and each of her members individually.



The teaching of the Cross necessarily implies the reality that God is one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Wherever one of the three divine Persons is found, there must be the other two as well<sup>3</sup>. The work of the Cross is surely a trinitarian work, the veritable epiphany of the triune God. It is true that the Son alone experienced death through His human nature on the Cross, but the reality of circumincession or the divine perichoresis cannot be dismissed as non-existent or non-operative at that time. The Lord says, *I am in the Father, and the Father is in me* (Jn 14: 10); likewise, *Whatsoever the Father does these also the Son does* (Jn 5: 19); and, *The Father who abides in me, He does the same works* (Jn 14: 10). Neither can the Son be *abandoned* absolutely speaking, for... *He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him* (Jn 8: 29). Hence, the Father and the Holy Spirit are intimately involved in all that the Lord Jesus Christ is and or does.

As the Holy Father teaches, what we see displayed on the Cross in the Person of the Victim of Calvary is the love of the Father which is transported on the wings of that Wind who is the Holy Spirit. Love personified, the same Holy Spirit, is the fire which consumes the Victim of the Cross: the Lamb of God. As the Successor of Peter teaches, *The Old Testament on several occasions speaks of fire from heaven which burnt the oblations presented by men* (cf. Lev 9: 24; 1 Kgs 18: 38; 2 Chron 7: 1). *By analogy one can say that the Holy Spirit is the fire from heaven which works in the depth of the mystery of the Cross. Proceeding from the Father, He directs towards the Father the sacrifice of the Son, bringing it into the divine reality of the trinitarian communion*<sup>4</sup>.

Although the Cross speaks necessarily of sin and its consequences —pain and death— indeed, even including the very *pain of God*, it is nonetheless the manifestation of victory and glory, joy and liberation. As the Holy Father teaches, *If sin caused suffering, now the pain of God in Christ crucified acquires through the Holy Spirit its full human expression. Thus, there is a paradoxical mystery of love: in Christ there suffers a God who has been rejected by his own creature: «They do not believe in me!» but, at the same time, from the depth of this suffering —and indirectly from the depth of the very sin «of not having believed»— the Spirit draws forth a new measure of the gift made to man and to creation from the*

beginning. In the depth of the mystery of the Cross, love is at work, that love which brings man back again to participate in the life that is God himself<sup>5</sup>.

Almost agonizingly, a human person longs to know himself: *Who am I? From where do I come? Where am I bound? What is the meaning of life, of death, of pain and suffering?* As the Council teaches, *Man will ever be anxious to know, if only in a vague way, what is the meaning of his life, his activity, and his death. The very presence of the Church recalls these problems to mind. The most perfect answer to these questionings is to be found in God alone, who created man in his own image and redeemed him from sin; and this answer is given in the revelation in Christ his Son who became man. Whoever follows Christ the perfect man becomes himself more of a man*<sup>6</sup>.

Love in all of its stark reality is displayed on the Cross. Without any question the inspired words of Sacred Scripture apply, *Stern as death is love, relentless as the netherworld is devotion. Deep waters cannot quench love nor floods sweep it away* (Song 8: 6-7).

John Paul II's teaching reflects the authentic message of the Cross. It is a message which is at times paradoxical and always mysterious; and truth being symphonic, the rhapsody of the Cross is the enchanting melody of merciful love which animates the entire symphony of God's trinitarian and eternal design for His creation.

## NOTES

1. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem*, 24.
2. Cf. S. THOMAS, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 1,2 ad 3; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 517.
3. Cf. *Denzinger-Schönmetzer* 1330-1332.
4. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem*, 41.
5. *Ibidem*.
6. VATICAN II, *Gaudium et spes*, 10.



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# THE CROSS AND THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN SUFFERING

## 1. THE NATURE OF HUMAN SUFFERING

### a) *The Primordial Origins*

One of the questions which has constantly occupied the thinking man throughout the ages has been the *Why?* of evil—the why of pain, suffering, and death. It has troubled the average man as well as philosophers and sages throughout the centuries. Where does evil come from? In the course of his painful search for the true God St. Augustine exclaimed, *Quaerebam unde malum et non erat exitus* (*I searched for the origin of evil and I did not find a solution*). Augustine learned, as all must, that the mystery of iniquity (cf. 2 Thes 2: 7) can be illuminated only by the light of the mystery of God's infinite merciful love, the mystery of our Faith (1 Tm 3: 16)<sup>1</sup>.

The question of evil is something one cannot be cavalier about in attempting to answer, for it concerns the most profound depths of the human person. It is, in effect, sacred ground. As John Paul says, *Suffering seems to belong to man's transcendence: it is one of those points in which man is in a certain sense destined to go beyond himself, and he is called to this in a mysterious way*<sup>2</sup>.

It is impossible to gain insight into the matter of evil—pain, suffering, and death—without making some reference to sin. The worst evil is moral evil<sup>3</sup>. Because of it *we know that all creation groans and is in agony even until now* (cf. Rom 8: 22).

In essence sin is disobedience. In the words of John Paul II: *«Disobedience» means precisely going beyond that limit, which remains impassible to the will and the freedom of man as a created*

being. For God the Creator is the one definitive source of the moral order in the world created by him. Man cannot decide by himself what is good and what is evil—cannot «know good and evil, like God.»<sup>4</sup>.

A world that searches solely in the order of effects for the solutions to the myriad of perplexing questions that surround the various evils which plague mankind engages in a fundamentally futile exercise. True answers are to be found only in the order of causes; the order of effects is the order of symptoms, and treating symptoms rarely cures the underlying disease. To look any place other than man's wounded nature, his sin, for the answers to the *Why* of evil is to guarantee failure in finding the answers to these questions. The Holy Father asserts that *Reconciliation cannot be less profound than the division itself. The longing for reconciliation, and reconciliation itself, will be complete and effective only to the extent that they reach—in order to heal it—that original wound which is the root of all other wounds: namely, sin*<sup>5</sup>.

#### b) *Personal Disorder the Cause of All Disorder*

The widespread appearance of famine, deadly and new diseases, wars breaking out over the globe with ever-greater frequency; all of these evils, this corporate and world-wide disintegration, has its genesis in that dis-integration at work inside of individual human persons. As the Holy Father teaches: *However disturbing these divisions may seem at first sight, it is only by a careful examination that one can detect their root: it is to be found in a wound in man's inmost self. In the light of faith, we call it sin: beginning with original sin, which all of us bear from birth as an inheritance from our first parents, to the sin which each one of us commits when we abuse our own freedom*<sup>6</sup>.

The world groans and suffers under the weight of this load of disunity, suffering, and death, trying to correct the myriad of evils which so plague mankind. Conferences and discussions, workshops and debates, social plans for renewal, economic recovery plans, etc., etc., prove ultimately to be *quick fixes* that treat symptoms rather than causes, hence they are in the long-run of little, if any, avail. Pain-killers do not cure cancer, the underly-



ing cause must be addressed. It is no different for the moral disease which afflicts that essentially moral being who is man. The moral genesis of all evil must be dealt with—we must deal with sin.

As the successor of Peter once again astutely asserts: *Reconciliation cannot be less profound than the division itself. The longing for reconciliation, and reconciliation itself, will be complete and effective only to the extent that they reach—in order to heal it—that original wound which is the root of all other wounds: namely, sin*<sup>7</sup>.

### c) *The Greater Evil: Moral Evil*

All of created being admits of degrees. Only the uncreated, absolute, and perfect God admits of no degrees. We say that things are good, better, and best, bad, worse, and the worst. This mode of expression manifests what common sense tells us about the world around us. Some evils are worse than others; some pain worse than other pain, etc. As we have stated previously, the worst evils are moral in nature. *Moral evil is incomparably worse than physical evil*<sup>8</sup>. Israel experienced this in a mysterious way, lamenting her ills, which were always linked to sin and evil<sup>9</sup>. It was through moral evil that all evil entered the universe, for in the beginning God created everything and declared it to be *good*, and even *very good* (Gen 1 *passim*). Hence, the worst evil is moral evil—sin; and sin, which is essentially pride issuing in disobedience, is the diametric opposite of the obedience of Jesus unto the Cross which effected salvation (cf. Phil 2: 6-9)<sup>10</sup>.

When we look into this realm of moral evil we are ultimately able to see that the worst moral evil in the order of causes is sin, which resulted in the crucifixion of God's only Son; while in the order of effects, the *definitive evil* is the loss of eternal life: damnation, hell, as John Paul teaches: *Man «perishes» when he loses «eternal life». The opposite of salvation is not, therefore, only temporal suffering, any kind of suffering, but the definitive suffering: the loss of eternal life, being rejected by God—damnation*<sup>11</sup>.

At this point we come into direct contact with the absolutely essential and pivotal point in coming to an understanding of the person and mission of Jesus Christ. The very name —*Jesus*— reveals the mystery. *Jesus, God saves*<sup>12</sup>, entered time and space in



the Incarnation for purposes of effecting Redemption<sup>13</sup>. There are some who ask *redemption from What?*. Once again, if one hasn't made *an error in the beginning*, the reply is *to redeem us from sin, Satan, and death*. Deny original sin and personal sin and we make the fatal error of attempting to divide or fracture the perfectly univocal Truth. Jesus Christ came to save us from sin, that lie which separates us from God our Father. *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life* (Jn 3: 16). Here we make contact with the heart of the matter, as the Holy Father expresses it: *These words spoken by Christ in His conversation with Nicodemus, introduce us into the very heart of God's salvific work. They also express the very essence of Christian soteriology, that is, of the theology of salvation*. Salvation means liberation from evil, and for this reason it is closely bound up with the problem of suffering [*emphasis author's*]<sup>14</sup>.

#### d) *The Definitive Evil is Eternal Damnation*

It is imperative that one understand that the *definitive evil* is eternal damnation, the loss of God for all eternity, the failure to achieve our supernatural end. This is the one truly definitive and absolute failure in a human life; this is what it really means to be an *unrealized person*; this is the absolute *identity crisis* —to fail to be what we are created to be. Man's one true end is supernatural— to be eternally one with the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit of love and truth<sup>15</sup>. If a man does not achieve this, if he does not tend toward this, suffering is the predictable result—both now and, if not rectified in this life through repentance, forever.

It is of this truth that John Paul teaches, *The only-begotten Son was given to humanity primarily to protect man against this definitive evil and against «definitive suffering.» In His salvific mission, the Son must therefore strike evil right at its transcendental roots from which it develops in human history. These transcendental roots of evil are grounded in sin and death: for they are at the basis of the loss of eternal life. The mission of the only-begotten Son con-*



sists in «conquering sin and death.» *He conquers sin by His obedience unto death, and He overcomes death by His resurrection*<sup>16</sup>.

Eternal Truth, He who is *the way, the truth, and the life* (cf. Jn 14: 6), came to destroy the lie which leads to death and the kingdom of the author of that lie, *the father of lies and murderer from the beginning* (cf. Jn 8: 44). All suffering is seen to be very small when compared to the absolute and *definitive suffering* of the eternal loss of God. This is what the *Father of mercies and God of all consolation* wished to save his wayward children from; this is the work of the God who *so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life* (Jn 3: 16). In this we begin to see unfold the answer to the mysterious question of the *Why?* of human suffering.

## 2. THE DEFINITIVE ANSWER TO THE «WHY?» OF SUFFERING IS FOUND ONLY IN LOVE

### a) *Jesus Christ Illuminates the Mystery of Suffering*

The definitive answer to the *Why?* of human suffering is found only in Jesus Christ. Whether we wish to learn about God or about humanity we have only one ultimate place to look —Jesus Christ. In the salvific work of Christ— a work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—man finds the answer to the question that has plagued him from the beginning when evil entered Eden. As the Holy Father teaches, the answer to the perplexing question of human suffering is found in the Cross of Christ; it is the mystery of divine love revealed on the Cross which illumines the dark mystery of human suffering<sup>17</sup>.

Contemporary man is afraid of both love and suffering. If he could bring himself to love —Gospel love— then he could bring himself to suffer without great fear. The true meaning of love which we find in Christ the Lord has to do with self-sacrifice, going out of oneself in order to effect the highest and best good for the sake of the beloved. We see this when we meditate on a crucifix; the mystery of the Cross reveals love to us. It is the love of God which we see behind the mystery of

redemptive suffering. When man comes to realize that he is called to participate in this great mystery of Redemption in Christ, then love will take the sting out of suffering, its ultimate cause which is sin, and its *wages* (cf. Rom 6: 23) which is death. For, *Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin...* (cf. 1 Cor 15: 55-56)<sup>18</sup>.

b) *The Only True «Liberation» Is From Sin, Satan, and Death*

We believe that the one and only true *liberation* which the Church ultimately teaches and lives is liberation from sin, Satan, and death. The liberation which Christ came to proclaim and to effect through the power of the Redemption is not a political one<sup>19</sup>. This is what the Jewish people were mistakenly waiting for: a messiah who would liberate them from Roman domination and the slavery of an oppressive political regime.

The Messiah had very little to say about the political and social situation of his people, and this regardless of Roman oppression. He makes it abundantly clear that He has no interest in being a political Messiah—a liberator from Roman tyranny. Jesus came to give us freedom from the sins which had enslaved us, freedom from eternal death (a consequence of these sins), and freedom from the dominion of Satan, *the father of lies and murderer from the beginning* (cf. Jn 8: 44). *The freedom brought by Christ through the Holy Spirit has restored to us the capacity, of which sin had deprived us, of loving God above all and of remaining in contact with him*<sup>20</sup>.

It seems that after almost 2.000 years some people, often those who should know better, continue to insist on recycling the same errors. The liberation of Christ, the Conqueror, is an interior liberation which frees the human person from that which truly enslaves him—sin<sup>21</sup>. In striking off the shackles of sin, our slavery to the author of sin, Satan, is likewise ended, recalling to us the words of Truth proclaimed to Cain:... *sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master* (Gen 4: 7). Christ, the Liberator, frees us from this cruel master of sin and death, making us masters in Him over sin, Satan, and death. Through this liberation we are, thus, no longer heirs to the





inevitable legacy of sin-death (cf. Rom 6: 23). Jesus himself taught this to the Jews when He told them that if they lived according to His teaching they would be free because the truth —He and His teaching, which are one— would set them free (cf. Jn 8: 31-32). We recall that the authentic Church and Christ are one (cf. Acts 9: 4-5), and *whoever hears you hears Me* (Lk 10: 16). Saul of Tarsus learned this on the road to Damascus and it *changed his life and filled his doctrine*, as Iginio Giordani has expressed it<sup>22</sup>.

This true freedom allows man to live the transcendence of his being over the world. It is Christ, the Truth (cf. Jn 14: 6), who makes us free, and by living according to his teaching we are liberated from evil: *If you live according to my teaching, you are truly my disciples; then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free* (Jn 8: 31-32). *If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed* (Jn 8: 36). The Son, through His liberating sacrifice of the Cross, enables his Spirit to come<sup>23</sup>, and *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (2 Cor 3: 17). As John Paul tells us, *To be set free from injustice, fear, constraint and suffering would be useless if we were to remain slaves in the depths of our hearts, slaves to sin. To be truly free, man must be liberated from this slavery and transformed into a new creature. The radical freedom of man thus lies at the deepest level, the level of openness to God by conversion of heart, for it is in man's heart that the roots of every form of subjection, every violation of freedom, are found*<sup>24</sup>.

Ideologies (not theology, properly called) such as *liberation theology*, which present themselves as a *reinterpretation* of the Christian and Christianity<sup>25</sup>, do not reflect revealed Truth, nor are they authentic vehicles for the self-communication of He who is Truth. Immutable Truth can be more and more deeply delved into throughout the ages; we can broaden and deepen our understanding of that unchangeable Truth, but the Truth itself cannot change, and any *reinterpretation* must always remain inside the essential circumscription of that Truth. The Church can never preach, teach, or interpret the one Truth essentially differently from the way the Truth Himself did it. Again, *By His salvific work, the only-begotten Son liberates man from sin and death*<sup>26</sup>. This is the one *liberation* which concerns Christ and His Church. All others are deceptions, impostors to the throne.

### c) *Crucified Love Is True Love*

It is through the mystery of crucified love that God showed that He *so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life* (Jn. 3: 16). It is, as John Paul teaches, *precisely by means of this suffering He must bring it about «that man should not perish, but have eternal life.» Precisely by means of His cross He must strike at the roots of evil, planted in the history of man and in human souls. Precisely by means of His cross He must accomplish the work of salvation. This work, in the plan of eternal Love, has a redemptive character...*

Christ goes toward His own suffering, aware of its saving power; He goes forward in obedience to the Father, but primarily He is united to the Father in this love with which He has loved the world and man in the world. And for this reason St. Paul will write of Christ: *«He loved me and gave himself for me»* (Gal 2: 20)<sup>27</sup>.

Love, evangelically speaking, is the most important word in human language, and not coincidentally it is the most misunderstood and misused word of our times. The *spirit of the world* has succeeded in trivializing, at times even profaning, a most noble word and the profoundly noble reality behind it. True love carries with it a cost; it is not cheap. One who truly loves is truly willing to pay a price for the sake of the beloved. One who truly loves is committed when times are easy or when times are not so easy. As the expression of the marriage vows has it: *in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, for poor or for rich, until death do we part*. Love, true love, implies radical commitment. We live in an age where Gospel love, the love of Christ (Gr. *agape*), is found wanting very often. The failure of marriages in contemporary society (more than 50% divorce rate in the United States for Catholic and non-Catholic alike by some estimates) and the large number of defections from both religious life and the priesthood seen in the past twenty-five or so years often reveal this failure of true love. In order to love we must be willing to sacrifice, to suffer if necessary. Crucified love is proven love, tried love, real love. Perfect love indeed casts out all fear (cf. 1 Jn 4: 18)—the fear of any and all forms of suffering and even the fear of death itself. The fear of any form of discomfort and suffering, any sacrifice, is a fear of true love; it is representative of our

contemporary paganism. *This contemporary paganism is characterized by the search for material well-being at any cost... and the fear, genuine panic of anything that could cause suffering. With this outlook, words such as God, sin, cross, mortification, eternal life... become incomprehensible*<sup>28</sup>.

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of Man, performed the great work of *divine alchemy*, converting the base metal of suffering into the gold of redemptive love. *The great Christian revolution has been to convert pain into fruitful suffering and so to turn a bad thing into something good. We have deprived the devil of this weapon; and with it we can conquer eternity*<sup>29</sup>. A radical change transforms the worst element of human existence into the potentially greatest if man would live the love of Christ. *In the Cross of Christ not only is the Redemption accomplished through suffering, but also human suffering itself is redeemed*<sup>30</sup>.

Without sacrifice love is empty; it is merely a word lacking the reality to fill it and give it life<sup>31</sup>. St. Paul knew of those who were *enemies of the Cross of Christ* (Phil 3: 18), those for whom sensory pleasures became their god. True faith enables us to understand that a life without sacrifice, a life without the Cross, can encounter no true love and experience no joy because of that. *The Cross is the living book in which we learn definitively who we are and how we ought to behave. This book is always open before us*<sup>32</sup>.

#### d) *Becoming True Children of the Heavenly Father*

Through His salvific suffering, through the Cross, the Son manifests the *heart and mind* of the Father who is merciful love<sup>33</sup>, a heart and a mind which are the divine love and truth—the Good and the True from which all that is good and true derives its very existence. Jesus, being the *image of the invisible God* (cf. 2 Cor 4: 4; Col 1: 15) and *the reflection of the Father's glory, the exact representation of the Father's being* (Heb 1: 3) is at the same time the one whose image the faithful were to share, as the Holy Spirit tells us: *predestined to share the image of His [God's] Son, that the Son might be the first-born of many brothers* (Rom 8: 29). For, *just as we resemble the man from earth [Adam], so shall*



we bear the likeness of the man from heaven [Jesus] (1 Cor. 15: 49)<sup>34</sup>. And when we live in *the glorious freedom of the children of God* (Rom 8: 21) we are filled with and animated by God's own Spirit, for *the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (2 Cor 3: 17)<sup>35</sup>. It is this Spirit, the *Divine Artist*, who is sculpting us into Christ, and *all of us, gazing on the Lord's glory with unveiled faces, are being transformed from glory to glory into his very image by the Lord who is the Spirit* (2 Cor 3: 18). This is the greatest proof of the Father's love: that He wills all of His adopted children to be one with His only-begotten Son by the power of the Spirit, so that God can be all in all. This is what it means to be fully human and fully free.

Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, is many things, but more than anything He is the *God who saves*. This is what He entered time and space for; it is the very meaning of His name. It is the quintessential case of a name which is *a positive hypostasis of the power of whoever the name belongs to. It represents a being, exteriorizes it, and makes its activity present*<sup>36</sup>. This is the essence of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, who reflects the Father's own mind and will. This is love, true self-sacrificing love.

The old saying *like father, like son* takes on its fullest meaning here. It does not end with Jesus' temporal life, however. It is carried on throughout time by the Church, and by each and every member of the Church. Each single member of the Church is called to be, in the way proper to their state of life, priest, prophet, and king<sup>37</sup>; in other words, all are called to be the living presence of Christ in the world. Holiness of life, to a large part achieved by bearing the Cross with Christ, is a most necessary and essential part of *being Christ*, as the Second Vatican Council teaches<sup>38</sup>.

Children must have a mother and the Lord willed that the children of grace have one too. It was from the Cross that all of the Father's children were richly endowed with a Mother, she who is the Mother of God. Through this common Mother all of the children are brought into the Father's house as a result of her intimate share in her Son's redemptive sacrifice. As John Paul reflects, *the divine Redeemer wishes to penetrate the soul of every sufferer [every human being] through the heart of his holy Mother, the first and most exalted of all the redeemed. As though by a continua-*



*tion of that motherhood which by the power of the Holy Spirit had given him life, the dying Christ conferred upon the ever Virgin Mary a new kind of motherhood—spiritual and universal—towards all human beings, so that every individual... might remain united with Him unto the Cross, and so that every form of suffering, given fresh life by the power of the Cross, should become no longer the weakness of man but the power of God<sup>39</sup>.*

In order to be these true children of the heavenly Father, true children of the Mother who was faithful unto the Cross, true brothers of the Crucified—in order to participate in this perfection of love which is personal holiness—the Christian must embrace the Cross, for to do so is to embrace the life of Christ and His redemptive mission, of which each person has his unique, precious, and unrepeatable part to play.

e) *The True Children Participate in the Paschal Mystery*

In order to *be Christ*, in order to be holy, as we have said, it is necessary to participate in the redemptive work of Christ. *The Redemption was accomplished through the Cross of Christ, that is, through His suffering<sup>40</sup>.* Man, every man, is called to *take up his cross* (cf. Mt 10: 38, 16: 24; Mk 8: 34, 10: 21; Lk 9: 23, 14: 27) and to follow the One who went from the suffering of Good Friday to the glory of Easter Sunday first. Redemptive suffering and death are the door that leads to eternal glory. *The disciple is not above his master* (Mt 10: 24; Lk 6: 40), and so must participate in the works of the Master, as the Second Vatican Council teaches<sup>41</sup>.

The work of the Apostolate, which is every Christian's concern, is principally the participation in, and application of, the power of the Paschal mystery. *The Apostolate has its counterpart in heaven. On God's part, it is a Kingdom; on earth, man's part is to suffer. In a certain sense, the measure of the Apostolate, given any man, is in equal measure to the suffering it occasions. Better still, the Apostolate is carried out both by teaching and suffering; the latter completes and confirms the former just as Jesus concluded His evangelization with His death on the Cross. Paul learned this also at*

*the moment his vocation was made known to him; and for this cause the persecutor became the persecuted*<sup>42</sup>.

The true children, like the only-begotten Son, must carry out the mission of the Son, thus manifesting the Father's merciful love to creation. In order to do this they must enter into the Paschal mystery with all their heart and mind and strength. To do so is the acidtest of authenticity. Those who are the true children of the heavenly Father are marked with His love, a love which drives them on to the Cross, to a life of total self-sacrifice unto the glory of God in the salvation of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

#### f) *Christian Suffering: Love, Mercy, and Justice*

When the Christian participates in the suffering of Christ through participation in human suffering, he participates in the love of God, the mercy of God, and the justice of God all at the same time. For, it is really impossible to separate love, mercy, and justice in God<sup>43</sup>. The terms may admit of logical distinctions, but in fact they form a unity. Again, the oneness of Truth is manifest. Sin offends the objective order of justice and this blow against the order in the universe demands satisfaction<sup>44</sup>.

Justice cannot be examined, nor practiced, in a vacuum. Justice flows from love and is conditioned by mercy. Justice, mercy and love, like the True, the Good, and Existence or Being itself, are a oneness. As John Paul says, *the experience of the past and of our own time demonstrates that justice alone is not enough, that it can even lead to the negation and destruction of itself, if that deeper power, which is love, is not allowed to shape human life in its various dimensions*<sup>45</sup>.

The necessary consequence of sin is suffering; not necessarily that the individual who suffers is guilty directly of sin and deserves what he suffers, as we see from the example of Job, and Jesus himself, but the universe cries out to have its order restored and this the Creator insures. Sometimes —very often— the innocent suffer in order to reintegrate the wounded children of God and bring them back into union with their Creator and Father. This is what the Redeemer does, and so too those who participate

in His redemptive mission. Justice is merciful. It flows from love and is animated by love in God. It serves more than anything a pedagogical purpose, as well as being a way of *rebuilding goodness* in the subject, as the Holy Father teaches<sup>46</sup>.

g) *The Pedagogical and Reconstructive Power of Suffering*

When a man participates in the redemptive suffering of Christ he is first of all *rebuilt in goodness*; this enables him to then be a channel for God's grace, which in turn effects this *rebuilding process* in the other members of the Body of Christ, who he is one with in a mystical way through the power of the Holy Spirit. The story of the *Prodigal Son* is a classic example from Sacred Scripture of this rebuilding process. The father knew that there was goodness in his son, and he rejoiced because of the salvation of that goodness. The squandering of his material inheritance is of small consequence in comparison to the preservation and restoration of his human dignity. The son, for his part, through the suffering he experienced in losing not only the material inheritance, but, most of all, his dignity as his father's son, was brought to repentance. As John Paul states it: *Through the complex material situation in which the prodigal son found himself because of his folly, because of sin, the sense of lost dignity had matured... at the center of the prodigal son's consciousness, the sense of lost dignity is emerging, the sense of that dignity that springs from the relationship of the son with the father*<sup>47</sup>.

Every man who experiences the separation from his Father's house through the evil of sin is called to repentance, to the rebuilding of goodness in himself. There is always mercy in God's justice, for in the Trinity all flows from love.

The more pure the one who suffers, the more God's redemptive power flows through him. Christ, perfectly innocent, perfectly holy, is the Priest and Victim who offers and suffers through every member of His Mystical Body, the Church. As the person is purified through various penances and sufferings, as he *is refined as silver is refined* (cf. Zec 13: 9) he becomes more like Christ. He decreases so that Jesus might increase (cf Jn 3: 30). This process is axiomatic for the authentic Christian life to flourish.



## h) *To Run From the Cross Is To Run From Life*

For this reason the headlong flight from penance and any form of generosity in suffering is in itself an evil. The Christian who does not take the precept of penance—which includes the acceptance of suffering—seriously, hurts himself and the Church by failing to *be Christ* in this essential way. To flee the Cross is to flee Christ, our only hope. Upon the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary of episcopal consecration Pope Leo XIII gave the universal Church his Encyclical *Laetitiae sanctae* (September 8, 1893), which emphasized the need for a spirit of penance and love of the cross in daily life<sup>48</sup>.

The Church's contemporary document on penitence likewise reflects her traditional belief in the need for this elemental and essential Christian virtue which carries with it the power of the Cross<sup>49</sup>.

To participate in suffering willingly is to participate in love willingly. The love of God overcomes the evil of sin and death. This is the definitive answer to the *Why?* of suffering. *Christ gives the answer to the question about suffering and the meaning of suffering not only by His teaching, that is, the Good News, but most of all by His own suffering, which is integrated with this teaching of the Good News in an organic and indissoluble way. And this is the final, definitive word of this teaching: «the word of the cross,» as St. Paul one day will say...*

*The words of that prayer of Christ in Gethsemane prove «the truth of love through the truth of suffering.»*<sup>50</sup>.

Through the Cross the Truth of God and the Love of God are manifested as one. The fragmentation in the universe precipitated by sin is reintegrated through the Cross. The vertical dimension of man's relationship with God is healed so that the horizontal dimension of man's relationship with his fellow man and all of creation might then be healed. Indeed, *the vertical and the horizontal cross only in the Cross of Christ*<sup>51</sup>.

Through the crucible of suffering man is tested to see if he is a true child of the Promise, if indeed he is an authentic son of God. This we see in the case of Job, a just and innocent man who suffers. We see it in Christ, the One who Job is the type of. The Only-begotten Son of God, who is Innocence and Justice





itself, suffers in a way that encompasses, penetrates, and sanctifies all human suffering. In the Old Testament God manifests very clearly that Job's suffering, the suffering of an innocent man, was a trial which was allowed for the purpose of showing his righteousness before God. It is in response to Satan's provocation that God sends forth one of his warriors to show that goodness yet lives in the order of creation (cf. Job 1: 9-11)<sup>52</sup>.

Through Christ, with Him, and in Him, each member of His Mystical Body lives the divine paradox of the redemptive sacrifice. Each human person can only be fully realized as a human person by *becoming Christ*, for *whoever follows Christ the perfect man becomes himself more of a man*<sup>53</sup>. The life and work of the follower of Jesus Christ can be neither salvific nor anointed if the suffering and darkness of the Cross (always oriented toward the light and glory of the Resurrection) is bracketed out or ignored as mythical or inconsequential. If we are to *be Christ*, then we must be the real Christ—who effected the Redemption through the power of suffering and the Cross<sup>54</sup>. St. Paul understood this so well. For the Apostle to the Gentiles the Christian's life is an exercise in faith and pain<sup>55</sup>.

### i) *Suffering and Spiritual Maturity*

The great saints and doctors of the Church who taught us about prayer and the spiritual life, filled with the Truth of God as they were, all in one way or another insisted on the necessity of passing through darkness to come into light, the need to suffer with Christ in order to reign with Christ, that power is only manifest in weakness in the *oekonomia* of God's plan of salvation, and the necessity to die in order to rise. The teaching of the saints is, of course, nothing other than the teaching of Christ and His Spirit working in His Church. This paradox is permeated with mystery, and mystery is one of the notes of the Truth which is essentially God himself. It should be no great *mystery*, then, why we cannot understand every facet of these matters all at once with our obviously finite intelligence. The approach to Truth is nothing less than an approach to God, and it can be undertaken successfully only by supplicants—never by commandants.

Man comes to know God in Christ Jesus through suffering. The closer he draws to the pain of the Cross by experiencing it first hand through his own personal suffering, the more he is permitted to know God. The Cross of Christ is not an abstraction; it is a living reality which every member of the Body of Christ must experience personally in order to be one with the one God—with His Truth and His Holiness. There is a sacredness to suffering which is hard to explain. We feel it when we approach a hospital room where Christ is suffering and dying in one of His faithful ones. Likewise, through suffering man comes to know himself, perhaps for the first time. The reason is, as we have stated previously, that it is close to Jesus Christ that we have come. *In suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ... When the body is gravely ill, totally incapacitated, and the person is almost incapable of living and acting, all the more do interior maturity and spiritual greatness become evident, constituting a touching lesson to those who are healthy and normal*<sup>56</sup>. When we draw near in such intimacy to Truth himself, the Spirit of Truth is imparted. From the Cross the Lord radiates himself to those suffering with Him and in Him. The more one experiences the suffering of Christ in his own life, the more he is likely to learn of Love and Truth and then be formed by them into Christ. It is never an easy lesson; it remains always a trial and a mystery, but it is the undeniable prerequisite of high sanctity, as is proven by the life of every saint whose heroicity of virtue the Church has ever formally proclaimed.

The call of the Cross is a call for man to *transcend himself*<sup>57</sup>. Unless love is tested and proven by generous acceptance of the pain and suffering of life, then there is a chance that it is not authentic, but rather self-serving. *El amor es la cruz, y la cruz es el amor* (love is the cross, and the cross is love) is the admonition that St. Teresa of Jesus (Avila) gave her sisters over and over again. St. John of the Cross in saying *En la tarde de la vida, te examinarán en el amor* (In the twilight of life we will be judged on love) was referring, as always, to that love which is tested in the crucible of suffering. Crucified love is authentic love.

Saints John of the Cross and Teresa of Jesus, both doctors of the Church, taught the undeniable necessity of participation in



the sufferings of Christ if one would advance in the spiritual life. Pope John Paul II has studied the Carmelite doctors well, and his teaching on the Cross and the meaning and value of human suffering reflect his formation in their mystical doctrine.

We are created for union with the Trinity. This is the reason for human existence. All avenues and approaches to life which do not travel the road toward this union are vacuous indeed. This is where lack of fulfillment comes from in human lives. The *unrealized person*, the person with an *identity crisis*, the one who wanders lost in a cold and confused world can find himself only in finding God in Jesus Christ. As the Cross loomed ever more prominent in the life of Christ, after He had made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He spoke of the necessity of dying to bring forth fruit, and that wherever He was, there his servants must be: *I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit... If anyone would serve me, let him follow me; where I am, there will my servant be* (Jn 12: 24-26).

The road leads to Calvary; it is to that *hill of skulls* that the servant must follow the Master, for there He *reigns from a tree*, and if the servant would reign with the Master he must *be where the Master is*. As St. Paul teaches: *You can depend on this: If we have died with him we shall also live with him; If we hold out to the end we shall also reign with him* (2 Tm 2: 11-12).

Union with the triune God, advancement in prayer, perfection, and holiness all go together—another strict unity. Just as Jesus himself had to *suffer and thus enter into His glory* (Lk 24: 26), and likewise as *we must die with Him in order to rise with Him* (Rom 6: 3-5), so too must we bear the share of the Cross which God has willed for us.

As we have stated, among the saints, one of those who best understood the necessity of suffering generously accepted in a human life is the doctor of prayer, St. Teresa of Avila. One of St. Teresa's favorite images for teaching the necessity of the Cross in human life in order for that person to advance in holiness is the following: *If the soil is well cultivated with trials and persecutions and criticisms and illnesses—for few there are who arrive at this state [union] without them—and if softened by living in great*



*detachment from self-interest, the water soaks in to such extent that it is almost never dry*<sup>58</sup>.

For St. Teresa and for all of the other true followers of Christ, *carrying the cross is a gift that has the power to transform us into a divine likeness and to effect our union with God*<sup>59</sup>. The Cross is the instrument which the Holy Spirit uses to *sculpt* Christ anew in the children of God. In a sense, it was man's worst enemy which was mystically transformed into his greatest good--suffering and death through the power of divine love became the vehicle which would convey all of the adopted children into their Father's house. All of this is only through, with, and in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of the Father.

### 3. THE GREAT GIFT OF REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING

#### a) *Christ Takes the Sting Out of Suffering and Death*

Through His suffering the Savior of the world took the *sting* out of suffering and death, as St. Paul taught using the language of the Old Testament in his first letter to the Corinthians: *Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death where is your sting? The sting of death is sin...* (1 Cor 15: 54-56).

Suffering and death have always been the much feared arch enemies of the children of Adam. Yet, now, because the Son of God who became the *Son of Man* has conquered sin, Satan, and death--evil--through the power of His Cross and Resurrection, all is changed. As John Paul expresses it: *One can say that with the passion of Christ all human suffering has found itself in a new situation. And it is as though Job had foreseen this when he said: «I know that my Redeemer lives...» (Job 19: 25), and as though he had directed towards it his own suffering, which without the Redemption could not have revealed to him the fullness of its meaning. In the cross of Christ not only is the Redemption accomplished through suffering, but also «human suffering itself has been redeemed.»*<sup>60</sup>.

It is the power of the Paschal mystery that has the potential to rescue contemporary man from his self-built moral morass. Twentieth century man labors under the weight of a despondency





bordering on despair. In a frantic effort to escape from reality he numbs himself with cheap pleasures: illicit sex, drugs, alcohol, the mad pursuit of the money that will buy all of the above; each one of which increases his personal suffering and the cumulative weight of the suffering of his world. Man is afraid of love, that love which might cost him something of himself. He has grown so morally frail that he fears that he might disappear if he gave something more of himself for someone other than himself. Yet, the Truth reveals to man that if only he would take the step out of himself to give of himself to God, and then to his fellow man, he would find peace, *God's own peace, which is beyond all understanding* (cf. Phil 4: 7). In loving he would no longer be haunted by the intimidating mob of fears that so paralyzes modern man, convincing him to *do evil and avoid good*. If he would love with the love of Christ modern man would find that indeed *perfect love casts out all fear* (cf. 1 Jn 4: 18).

#### b) *The Love and Truth of the Cross Transforms Evil*

A mystical transformation of human suffering takes place through the suffering of Christ. Christ, *the perfect man*<sup>61</sup> who from all eternity is God, through His suffering, took up into Himself all human suffering for all time, raising it to the level of the Redemption<sup>62</sup>. The eternal Son of God, whose actions transcend the bonds of time and space, touches and transforms all human pain, suffering, and death itself. As John Paul teaches, it is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of divine love, who transforms suffering into salvific love: *Proceeding from the Father, he directs toward the Father the sacrifice of the Son, bringing it into the divine reality of the Trinitarian communion... In the depth of the mystery of the Cross, love is at work, that love which brings man back again to share in the life that is in God himself*<sup>63</sup>.

In a reality that is analogous to the mystery of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, whenever a member of the *entire Christ*, a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, suffers it is Christ suffering in him. We enter into the suffering and death of Christ in order to participate with Him in His Resurrection. Just as the Mass is not *another* sacrifice, but the *same sacrifice* which we enter

into through the holy Mass, so too does the Christian *enter into* the passion, death, and Resurrection of Christ. The Paschal mystery is integral; there is only one Paschal mystery, and the individual Christian and Christ are one in suffering, dying, and rising again. Only *through Him, with Him, and in Him* is there any power in suffering and death; and only *through Him, with Him, and in Him* can we rise to our eternal destiny. For this reason we can say there is only one Cross. Logically we can make distinctions by saying we must carry *our crosses*, however, it is more expressive of the reality to say *we must carry our share of the one Cross of Christ*. The Cross and the Truth have many facets, but the beautiful Jewel that they are simply reflects the one Light of Christ in the varied and beautiful colors of the transcendently resplendent rainbow which is the Church and each of its many members. Again, the mystery of unity is seen in the uncounted millions who participate throughout the ages in the one-only Paschal mystery, propelled by the glory of the Cross to the glory of the heavenly kingdom.

Jesus himself acts powerfully at the very heart of human suffering, through his Spirit of Truth, transforming it through love to the power of the Redemption<sup>64</sup>. The Lord reveals to His suffering brother or sister the value of such a commerce of love. The experience of evil becomes the occasion of the most graced of moments, the soul drawing closer to He who, through the pain of the Cross, has drawn close to her. In this way Christ lovingly leads the suffering servant into *the horizons of the Kingdom of God: the horizons of a world converted to the Creator, of a world free from sin, a world being built on the saving power of love*<sup>65</sup>. From the inside out, the suffering member of Christ's Body, the Church, experiences that purification which results in pure gold, formed in the crucible of pain (cf. Jud 8: 27; Prv 17: 3, 27: 21; Sir 2: 5). The Spirit of Truth (cf. Jn 14: 17, 15: 26, 16: 13) thus forms in the faithful He who is the Truth (cf. Jn 14: 6) through the truth of the Cross.

The Cross is the great work of Truth because truth is indissolubly linked with humility for man. The word *humility* is derived from the Latin *humus*, which means earth, soil, or dirt. Humility acknowledges the truth of man's origin in the dust from



which Adam is made. This is an acknowledgment which is diametrically opposed to the pride which resulted in the disobedience, the *rapina*, of the original sin, wherein man believed he could be *like God* (cf. Gn 3: 4-5). The sacrifice of the Cross is the quintessential manifestation of humility issuing in obedience. It is the revelation of the humble obedience of the Son of God who, unlike the first Adam, *did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at*, rather, He assumed a human nature and *accepted even death, death on a cross* (cf. Phil 2: 6-8). Humility is truth<sup>66</sup>. God is Truth<sup>67</sup>. Man who is created in the image of God should imitate God in the way proper to a creature, but in trying to *be like God* (cf. Gn 3: 4-5) through the *rapina*, he lost God's grace. *Humility is the rejection of appearances and of superficiality; it is the expression of the depth of the human spirit; it is a condition for its greatness*<sup>68</sup>.

As St. Thomas teaches, the good of the intellect is truth; its evil is falsity. The perfect human intellect of the first man had no tendency whatever to admit its evil. Hence, as long as he perished in preternatural innocence man could not be deceived. When Eve was deceived by the serpent, she must have already sinned through pride, and so lost the immunity to deception<sup>69</sup>. The antithesis of humility —pride— resulted in the serious wound to man's ability to discern the truth; man can now be deceived, and the result of the deception proves deadly in that man's greatness —his ability to know and love God who is Truth— is wounded. The *image* within is now fractured; man sees a distorted image of Truth through the fractured glass of his wounded nature. This defect in his ability to embrace the very Object he is created for causes him pain in all of its manifold forms.

Through the sacrifice of the Cross, He who is the Truth (cf. Jn 14: 6) acts with absolute humility, hence, truth, through his perfect human nature. Being preceeds action. He who is Being itself, Truth itself, performs the perfect work of Truth and Life: the work of the Cross. As a result, the Spirit of Truth is enabled to be sent who will lead us into *all the truth* (cf. Jn 16: 13)<sup>70</sup>. The Cross is the epiphany of Truth, the victory of Truth, the epiphany and victory of the triune God who is the Truth in which all truth subsists<sup>71</sup>.



c) *Every Person Called to Share In the Cross of Christ*

Each individual human person, wherever and whenever he suffers, has the opportunity of participating in the redemptive mission of Christ, as the Holy Father teaches: *The Redeemer suffered in place of man and for man. Every man has his own share in the Redemption. Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ*<sup>72</sup>.

Every person, without exception, is called upon, each in a unique, precious, and unrepeatable way to *labor in the Lord's vineyard*. Every person is called upon to evangelize and build up the Body of Christ, the Church. Those who are often looked upon as the weakest and most useless are in truth the ones endowed with the most power to labor and evangelize. God's strength is made perfect in weakness (cf. 2 Cor 12: 9) and the mightiest warriors in the cosmic war between the forces of light and darkness will be proven to be those who had the greatest love, which means accepted most generously the greatest share in the fearsome weapon against evil—the Cross of Christ<sup>73</sup>. As John Paul teaches, no one is exempt from fruit-bearing labor in the vineyard of the Lord, even the sick are called to play their part in the building up of the Kingdom of God. Their very situation is filled with grace<sup>74</sup>.

St. Paul reflected constantly and deeply on this mystery of the individual Christian's participation in the Paschal mystery. Passages such as the following are representative of the Apostle to the Gentiles' teaching on the subject: *We are afflicted in every way possible, but we are not crushed; full of doubts, we never despair. We are persecuted but never abandoned; we are struck down but never destroyed. Continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed* (2 Cor 4: 8-11).

*And now, brothers, I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship* (Rom 12: 1).





In St. Paul's doctrine, as in all Revelation, this suffering and death in Christ is always oriented toward Resurrection in Christ: *As we have shared much in the suffering of Christ, so through Christ do we share abundantly in his consolation* (2 Cor 1: 5).

*I wish to know Christ and the power flowing from his resurrection; likewise to know how to share in his sufferings by being formed into the pattern of his death. Thus do I hope that I may arrive at resurrection from the dead* (Phil 3: 10).

In the end, in sharing in the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Christ we prove ourselves true children of our heavenly Father. We do this by *imitating God* (cf. Eph 5: 1) in accordance with the mandate of the Holy Spirit spoken by the same Apostle to the Gentiles: *Be imitators of God as his dear children. Follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you. He gave himself for us an offering to God, a gift of pleasing fragrance* (Eph 5: 1-2).

In *imitating God* it is essential that we be filled with His Spirit, manifesting that self-donating love which we see in the only-begotten Son of the Father crucified. It is necessary that we suffer and die in Christ for the salvation of our brothers and sisters in the world in order to rise again.

d) *Christ's Suffering Redeems and Sanctifies All Human Suffering*

The *eloquence of the Cross and death is completed by the eloquence of the resurrection*, as the Holy Father expresses it<sup>75</sup>. This is the heart of the true answer to the *Why?* of human suffering. Because it is *God who suffers on the Cross* there is a transcendent dimension to that suffering. It is not just any man who is suffering and dying in order to rise. It is the Only-begotten Son of the Father. We are involved with a theandric action here, and because of this all suffering is enabled to be *redeemed* and taken up into the transcendent suffering of the Son of God. All of the suffering of man from the moment evil entered Eden until time breathes forth its last moment, and the Lord will come again in glory, is taken up and transformed in the redemptive suffering of Christ<sup>76</sup>.

Thus, Christ's transcendent and all-encompassing suffering is open to every human suffering. Man, in his likeness to God, must

use his intellect and will to accept the gift made available to him. The door is open for man, every man, to enter with all of the pain and suffering of his life, and, then, his death, into the transcendent suffering and death of Christ, true God and true man. In Christ the Christian is taken up, as it were, into this triumphant reality of the Paschal mystery. Man is *lifted up* in Christ *drawing all men to Him* (cf. Jn 12: 32).

This suffering, this one-only Cross, this grand work of Redemption, was completed by Christ and suffices to redeem an infinity of worlds, but it is God's eternal, ineffable and inscrutable will that the adopted children participate actively in this mystery. Thus, the suffering, the agonizing, the dying, and the rising continue in the Church in the individual members of Christ: the Priestly People of God. As John Paul teaches, *For, at the same time, this Redemption, even though it was completely achieved by Christ's suffering, lives on and in its own special way develops in the history of man. It lives and develops as the Body of Christ, the Church, and in this dimension every human suffering, by reason of the loving union with Christ, completes the suffering of Christ. It completes that suffering just as the Church completes the redemptive work of Christ. The mystery of the Church—that body which completes in itself also Christ's crucified and risen body—indicates at the same time the space or context in which human sufferings complete the sufferings of Christ*<sup>77</sup>.

### e) *The Joy of Christian Suffering*

In his teaching the Holy Father touches upon what is one of the key passages in Sacred Scripture, which, when understood in the light of the Gospel of John (3: 16), gives us the glorious answer to mankind's plaintive *Why?: Even now I find my joy in the suffering I endure for you. In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church* (Col 1: 24).

It is precisely here that all of the pain and suffering of a universe takes on real meaning. It is *in Christ* that our human suffering is given intelligibility. In Incarnate Wisdom we find the answer. We are one with Him by being part of His Mystical



Body, the Church. There is nothing at all lacking in Christ's redemptive work; there couldn't possibly be. What could a divine Person lack, either in His being or in His work? Nothing at all. The great treasure, *the pearl of great price* (cf. Mt 13: 46), which we find is that precisely because of this, as it were, Jesus stopped time and space and gave each one of us the *time* and the *space* to be taken up into the Paschal mystery. He didn't want to leave us behind. He didn't want to leave us out of so great a work. If we are the children of God, then we would have the incalculable blessing of sharing in the work of the Only-begotten of the Father. And this sharing is not purely passive; it requires the active use of the intellect and will, illumined and empowered by God's grace. Each one of us would receive the gift of being a savior in the one Savior. We are not in any way at odds with Him or His work; we are part of both Him and His mission of Redemption.

f) *The Redemptive Suffering of Christ Is Completed in the Church*

It is in the Church, and only in the Church, that the redemptive suffering of Christ is *completed*, as John Paul teaches, *It is precisely the Church, which ceaselessly draws on the infinite resources of the Redemption, introducing it into the life of humanity, which is the dimension in which the redemptive suffering of Christ can be constantly completed by the suffering of man. This also highlights the divine and human nature of the Church. Suffering seems in some way to share in the characteristics of this nature. And for this reason suffering also has a special value in the eyes of the Church. «It is something good,» before which the Church bows down in reverence with all the depth of her faith in the Redemption. She likewise bows down with all the depth of faith with which she embraces within herself the inexpressible mystery of the Body of Christ*<sup>78</sup>.

It is here that we find the unfathomable and inestimable riches which are the inheritance of every single member of the Church. We share everything with our Savior and Brother, Jesus Christ. His redemptive mission is so monumental, so glorious, that He could not but wish to share the glory with each of His



Father's adopted children. His very nature would not allow Him to keep all of the victory for Himself. He deserves all of the victory; He won the victory himself; only He could do it—only He who is God and the perfect Man. Yet, reflecting the Father's generosity, He left the great work of Redemption open to all who would accept their proper share of it, which He offers through grace. This means that the integrity of the package must be accepted, not part of it. Indeed, we can depend on this: *If we have died with him we shall also live with him; If we hold out to the end we shall also reign with him* (2 Tm 2: 11-12). The Cross and the glory cannot be separated. Indeed, the Cross is glory in itself, and those who would be taken up in the glory must walk the way of the Cross.

g) *To Share Christ's Suffering Is To Share His Love*

It is not a coincidence that one who studies carefully the lives of the saints will find a great love of suffering manifested in every case. The saints had great eyes for Truth; they were in touch with reality far more than the vast majority of men; they knew that *the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is our only boast* (cf. Gal 6: 14-15). The saints are much more healthy in mind and spirit than other men. They know what is dust and what is *the pearl of great price* (cf. Mt 13: 46), and they call each by its proper name, not being confused nor seduced by the world's alluring rhetoric. The saints gladly *sold* everything to *purchase* the Cross in their lives: persecutions, misunderstandings, physical suffering, darkness and aridity of spirit are all the lot of the saints in light. Those who have eyes and ears for Truth know that *we must undergo many trials if we are to enter the reign of God* (Acts 14: 22). Not only that, the saints even boast of their afflictions, proclaiming that, *we know that affliction makes for endurance, and endurance for tested virtue, and tested virtue for hope. And this hope will not leave us disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5: 3-5).

Each person who shares in the Paschal mystery through sharing in the suffering of Christ in his own personal suffering





takes up one of the two great weapons we use in the cosmic battle of the kingdoms. The Children of Light must use the two-edged sword of Truth and redemptive suffering to wage war against the one who first brought pain, suffering and death into creation —the Evil One— the author of all evil. The Cross and Truth are inseparable allies, the two edges of the same sword, which from all eternity the inscrutable mind of God has willed to use to strike down the lie which brought disorder, suffering and death to the universe. How great the cause of our joy in considering that each member of the Church shares in this glorious battle for our Father's Kingdom. To be a *member of Christ* is no mere turn of phrase. It is at once a realization which startles us, thrills us, exalts us, and terrifies us, for included in the reality is all of the darkness and desolation of the Garden of Gethsemane and the Hill of Skulls. The glory and light-filled sunrise of Easter morn can simply not be experienced in the triumphant and eternal way God wills unless all of the pain and darkness of Good Friday are first endured *through Him, with Him, and in Him*.

Each human person in the infinitely magnanimous design of God is called to the highest level of holiness and perfection<sup>79</sup>. Indeed, it was not an invitation nor request which the divine Master levelled when He said *you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Mt 5: 48). It has all of the resonance and power of a divine mandate. In achieving that holiness of life it is absolutely essential that we must *in our own flesh fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church*, and not only that, we must do it with joy, proclaiming with St. Paul: *Even now I find my joy in the suffering I endure for you* (cf. Col 1: 24). This is the joy of all joys: to be one with Christ the Lord, the Only-begotten of the Father, and through Him and in Him to be brought into union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Here we find the realization of all human potential, the meaning of life, and the answer to the primordial *Why?* of human suffering. *For, whoever suffers in union with Christ —just as the Apostle Paul bears his «tribulations» in union with Christ— not only receives from Christ that strength already referred to but also «completes» by his suffering «what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.» This evangelical outlook especially highlights the truth concerning the creative character of suffering. The sufferings of Christ created the good of the world's Redemption.... Insofar as man becomes a*

*sharer in Christ's sufferings—in any part of the world and at any time in history—to that extent he in his own way completes the suffering through which Christ accomplished the Redemption of the world*<sup>80</sup>.

What a message of hope for the world, for each and every human person made in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. In an age when the temptation to deny, diminish, or destroy human dignity is so widespread and so violent, this is a message which contains the answer to all of suffering mankind's pained and perplexed questions. We are each called to be holy, called to be one in Christ, animated by the one Spirit of Life and Love, thus rescuing the poor suffering children of God. This is what it means to be fully human! Indeed, we find out that *whoever follows Christ the perfect man becomes himself more of a man*<sup>81</sup>. We learn that the Cross of Christ is indeed the crossroads where all roads and all truths converge, for there we come face to face with Truth Himself. He reveals the truth of the Father's merciful love to us, and, in so doing, our own inestimable dignity as human persons—children and heirs of our Father's kingdom. We find out in this dark light of the Cross that to be placed on the Cross through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ is to be placed at the pinnacle of human possibilities.

#### h) *The Cross and the Cosmic Battle*

It is no wonder that St. Paul speaks of the joy of suffering (cf. Col 1: 24). What a truly amazing revelation that suffering and death are no longer the worst and most terrifying things in a human life; but that in Christ they are transformed into weapons of light and love to strike down evil and bring forth life, allowing the Christian to perform an *irreplaceable service, clearing the way for the grace that transforms souls, this suffering constituting a special support for the powers of good in the cosmic battle against evil, the Church seeing in all of the suffering brothers and sisters of Christ a multiple subject of His supernatural power*, as John Paul teaches<sup>82</sup>.

Thus, all of the sons and daughters of the heavenly Father are caught up in the mystery and the power of the Paschal



mystery in Jesus Christ. Each one is called in Christ to carry out the will of the Father, who willed that *not one of these little ones should perish* (cf. Mt 18: 14). And in carrying out the will of the Father each of His children must keep words such as those of St. Cyril of Jerusalem in mind: *The Catholic Church glories in every deed of Christ. Her supreme glory, however, is the Cross. Well aware of this, Paul says: «God forbid that I glory in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!»*

*... For us, however, the Cross is the crown of victory! It has brought light to those blinded by ignorance. It has released those enslaved by sin. Indeed, it has redeemed the whole of mankind!*

Do not, then, be ashamed of the Cross of Christ; rather, glory in it.

He was not killed by violence, he was not forced to give up his life. He was a willing sacrifice.

*Will you refuse to be crucified for him, who for your sake was nailed to the Cross?*<sup>83</sup>

### i) *The Cross: New Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*

The knowledge of good and evil, and the answers to the questions that have always perplexed man cannot be taken forcibly by the arrogant; these things are reserved for the poor and the humble. We find that in the dark light of the Cross we find the *Light of the world* himself. The Cross is the new *tree of the knowledge of good and evil* whereon the New Adam, through humble obedience unto death, won light and life for the children of Adam, who, through arrogant disobedience, brought darkness and death upon himself and all of creation. Those who want light must brave the darkness, and those who seek glory must seek first the glorious Cross, which makes them one with Christ and co-heirs of the glory of God. God willingly gives to eat of this new tree of the knowledge of good and evil, sharing His inscrutable wisdom with His creatures.

One of the Church's great heroes, a saint proclaimed a doctor of the Church, knew much about darkness and the light that it can give birth to. St. John of the Cross, whose name tells us



something of his life, expresses it thus, *would that men might come at last to see that it is quite impossible to reach the thicket of the riches and wisdom of God except by first entering the thicket of much suffering, in such a way that the soul finds there its consolation and desire. The soul that longs for divine wisdom chooses first, and in truth, to enter the thicket of the cross...*

The gate that gives entry into these riches of his wisdom is the Cross; because it is a narrow gate, while many seek the joys that can be gained through it, it is given to few to desire to pass through it<sup>84</sup>.

Now every dark cloud that will ever ominously appear on the horizon of man's sojourn in this land of exile takes on new meaning in the light of the Cross. The darkness that seemed fatal proves to be in reality the very light which gives life to men. *The light shines on in darkness, a darkness that did not overcome it* (Jn 1: 5).

## CONCLUSION

Pope John Paul II imparts to us the true meaning of the Cross of Christ. In the light of the Cross we are enabled to begin to see the true face of God—a Father who is merciful love. Only in Christ can man come to know divinity and humanity; only in Christ can man discern from where he has come and to where he is bound<sup>85</sup>.

Man's suffering remains an enigma without the light of Christ, the God who is love. The love which man finds revealed to him by the Cross of Christ gives meaning to the most difficult things in his life. Without this love man *remains a being that is incomprehensible to himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it*<sup>86</sup>.

The Cross of Christ concerns all of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. The Father's love is seen displayed in the Person of the Son crucified. The Holy Spirit, personified Love, transforms this suffering through love into redemptive power, thus reconciling all of creation through, with and in Christ with



the Father once again. As the Holy Father teaches, *the Spirit draws a new measure of the gift made to man and to creation from the beginning. In the depth of the mystery of the Cross, love is at work, that love which brings man back again to share in the life that is in God himself.... we can say: He consumes the sacrifice with the fire of love which unites the Son with the Father in the trinitarian communion. Thus, the Spirit of Love works in the depths of the Paschal Mystery, as the source of the salvific power of the Cross of Christ, and as the gift of new and eternal life*<sup>87</sup>.

Every human person has cause to rejoice in the Cross of Christ. It is the reason that St. Paul speaks of the *joy* of suffering (cf. Col 1: 24). The consoling revelation for each man is that his suffering is not the worst and most useless thing in his life, but, rather, that through the transforming power of love it is the highest, most noble, and powerful thing in his earthly existence. It is what conforms him most to Christ, the crucified and risen one. One must walk through the apparent darkness of the Cross to enter the glorious light of the Resurrection. Man has reason to rejoice in his share in the Cross, for as John Paul teaches us, *in the work of Redemption he [man] is serving, like Christ, the salvation of his brothers and sisters. Therefore, he is carrying out an irreplaceable service. In the Body of Christ, which is ceaselessly born of the Cross of the Redeemer, it is precisely this suffering permeated by the spirit of Christ's sacrifice that is the irreplaceable mediator and author of the good things which are indispensable for the world's salvation. It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption. In that «cosmic» struggle between the spiritual powers of good and evil, spoken of in the letter to the Ephesians (cf. Eph 6: 12), human sufferings, united to the redemptive suffering of Christ, constitute a special support for the powers of good, and open the way to the victory of these salvific powers*<sup>88</sup>.

Man, in his suffering, finds new hope and meaning for life. In Christ he is victorious, and victorious through the very suffering that seems to defeat him. Man, with Christ, is thus *lifted up*, and it is from this height that he is —through, with and in

Christ— enabled to draw all things to God himself (cf. Jn 3: 14, 12: 32, 34). The joy of man is thus that he is performing the most valuable task imaginable: he is contributing to God's eternal design *that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life* (Jn 3: 16).



## NOTES

1. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 385.
2. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 2.
3. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 311.
4. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem*, 36.
5. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, 3.
6. *Ibidem*, 2.
7. *Ibidem*, 3.
8. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 311.
9. Cf. *Ibidem*, 1502.
10. Cf. *Ibidem*, 1850.
11. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 14.
12. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 430.
13. Cf. S. THOMAS, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 1, 2 ad 4; Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 432, 517.
14. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 14.
15. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 27-30, 50.
16. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 14.
17. *Ibidem*, 13:

In order to perceive the true answer to the *why* of suffering, we must look to the revelation of divine love, the ultimate source of the meaning of everything that exists. Love is also the richest source of the meaning of suffering, which always remains a mystery: we are conscious of the insufficiency and inadequacy of our explanations. Christ causes us to enter into the mystery and to discover the *why* of suffering, as far as we are capable of grasping the sublimity of divine love.

In order to discover the profound meaning of suffering, following the revealed Word of God, we must open ourselves wide to the human subject in his manifold personality. We must above all accept the light of revelation not only insofar as it expresses the transcendent order of justice but also insofar as it illuminates this order with Love, as the definitive source of everything that exists. Love is also the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering. This answer has been given by God to man in the cross of Jesus Christ.

18. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *The Cross Transfigures Human Suffering*, address to the sick outside the monastery of Jasna Gora, Poland, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., 4 June, 1979; *In the Cross God Changed the Meaning of Suffering*, address to the sick at Little House of Divine Providence, in

- L'Osservatore Romano*, 13 April, 1980; *The Fullest Sign of God's Love*, homily at Eucharist, Arizona State University, USA, 14 September, 1987, in *John Paul II in America*, St. Paul Editions, Boston, 1987, 160 *et sequitur*.
19. Cf. SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Libertatis nuntius*, Aug. 8, 1984, AAS 76 (1984) 876 *et seq*; JOHN PAUL II, Instruction *Libertatis conscientia*, Mar. 22, 1986, AAS 78 (1986).
20. Cf. SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, 53, 22 Mar. 1986, AAS 78 (1986).
21. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1739-1742; cf. *Acceptance of Suffering for the Victory of Good Over Evil*, address from the Sanctuary of Merciful Love, Collevaleza, Italy, 22 November, 1981, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed.
22. I. GIORDANI, *St. Paul Apostle and Martyr*, St. Paul Editions, Boston, 1981, 242:  
The teaching of Paul, as we find it in his letters and in the writings of St. Luke, is contained for the most part in the question that Jesus addressed to him from the cloud of light on the road to Damascus. *Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?* That question had enlightened the Pharisee, so blind in the depths of his soul, unveiling for him the great reality that Christ and the Christian are one. This common identity had impressed him and left its stamp on all his doctrine.  
Once this was clear to Paul, he knew that as a Christian he was one with Christ. Grace and will made this union so strong that never again was it Paul who lived, but Christ living in him. Starting from the first premise, that the Christian is another Christ, an *alter Christus*, then the Apostolate became a spiritual effusion which nothing could stop, an exuberant activity and the very life of the new man. Henceforth, he acts as in Christ with Whom he has become one body.
23. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem*, 14.
24. JOHN PAUL II, *Message for World Peace Day*, Dec 8, 1980, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed.
25. L. F. MATEO SECO, G. Gutierrez-H. Assmann-R. Alves: *Teología de la liberación*, Madrid, 1981, 166; cf. Instruction of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis nuntius*, 6 July, 1984, AAS 76 (1984) 876 *et seq*, VI. 1. *A New Interpretation of Christianity*.
26. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 15.
27. *Ibidem*, 16.
28. A. DEL PORTILLO, *Pastoral Letter*, Dec 25 1985, 4.
29. J. ESCRIVÁ, *Furrow*, 887.
30. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 19.
31. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *The Cross of Suffering Is a Source of Grace and Salvation*, address at Marituba leper colony, Belem, Brazil, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., 8 July, 1980; *Incomparable Efficacy of Suffering for Implementing the Plan of Salvation*, address taped at Gemelli Hospital, 24 May, 1981, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed.
32. JOHN PAUL II, *Address*, Apr 1 1980, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed.
33. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, 2.
34. Cf. VATICAN II, *Gaudium et spes*, 12 re: *Man as the Image of God*.



35. Cf. *Ibidem*, 17.
36. L. CERFAUX, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul*, Herder and Herder, New York, 1962, 478.
37. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 14.
38. VATICAN II, *Lumen gentium*, 40-41:  
... The forms and tasks of life are many but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who act under God's Spirit and, obeying the Father's voice and adoring God the Father in spirit and in truth, follow Christ, poor, humble and *cross bearing* [emphasis author's], that they deserve to be partakers of his glory.
39. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 26.
40. Cf. *Ibidem*, 3.
41. VATICAN II, *Gaudium et spes*, 22:  
Conformed to the image of the Son who is the firstborn of many brothers (cf. Rom 8: 29; Col 3: 10-14), the Christian man receives the *first fruits of the Spirit* (Rom 8: 23) by which he is able to fulfill the new law of love (cf. Rom 8: 1-11). By this Spirit, who is the *pledge of our inheritance* (Eph 1: 14), the whole man is inwardly renewed, right up to the *redemption of the body* (Rom 8: 23). *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you* (Rom 8: 11; cf. 2 Cor 4: 14). The Christian is certainly bound both by need and by duty to struggle with evil through many afflictions and to suffer death; but, as one who has been made a partner in the paschal mystery, and as one who has been configured to the death of Christ, he will go forward, strengthened by hope, to the resurrection (cf. Phil 3: 10; Rom 8: 17).
42. I. GIORDANI, *St. Paul Apostle and Martyr*, St. Paul Editions, Boston, 242.
43. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, 4.
44. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 10:  
The God of Revelation is the Lawgiver and Judge to a degree that no temporal authority can be. For the God of Revelation is first of all the Creator, from whom comes, together with existence, the essential good of creation. Therefore, the conscious and free violation of this good by man is not only a transgression of the law but at the same time an offense against the Creator, who is the first Lawgiver. Such a transgression has the character of sin, according to the exact meaning of this word, namely the biblical and theological one. *Corresponding to the moral evil of sin is punishment*, which guarantees the moral order in the same transcendent sense in which this order is laid down by the will of the Creator and Supreme Lawgiver...  
... From this point of view, suffering appears as a *justified evil*. The conviction of those who explain suffering as a punishment for sin finds support in the order of justice...
45. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, 12.
46. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 12:  
Already in the Old Testament we note an orientation that begins to go beyond the concept according to which suffering has a meaning only as a punishment for sin, insofar as it emphasizes at the same time the educa-

tional value of suffering as a punishment. Thus in the sufferings inflicted by God upon the Chosen People there is included an invitation of His mercy, which corrects in order to lead to conversion:... *these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people* (2 Mac. 6: 12).

Thus the personal dimension of punishment is affirmed. According to this dimension, punishment has a meaning not only because it serves to repay the objective evil of the transgression with another evil, but first and foremost because it creates the possibility of rebuilding goodness in the subject who suffers.

...Suffering must serve for conversion, that is, for the rebuilding of goodness in the subject, who can recognize the divine mercy in this call to repentance. The purpose of penance is to overcome evil, which under different forms lies dormant in man. Its purpose is also to strengthen goodness both in man himself and in his relationships with others and especially with God.

47. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, 5.

48. LEO XIII, Ency. *Laetitiae sanctae*, Sept. 8, 1893, in *Papal Teachings. The Holy Rosary*, selected and arranged by the Benedictine Monks of Solesmes, trans. P. J. Oligny, St. Paul Editions, Boston, 1980, 96-98: *There is [an] extremely baleful evil which we cannot sufficiently deplore because it is spreading day by day to the great detriment of souls. We refer to the determined will to avoid suffering, to use every means to avoid suffering and to reject adversity.*

... *We speak of... that patience which takes as its model Him who «for the sake of the joy which lay before him... endured the cross, heedless of its shame» (Heb 12: 2). We mean that patience which, after having asked God for the help of His grace, does not take exception to any suffering, but rather rejoices in it and, whatever it is, considers it gain.*

49. PAUL VI, Apostolic Constitution *Paenitemini*, 17 Feb 1966, Chap. III: [The Church] insists first of all that the virtue of penitence be exercised in persevering faithfulness to the duties of one's state in life, in the acceptance of difficulties arising from one's work and from human coexistence, in a patient bearing of the trials of this earthly life and of the utter insecurity which pervades it (cf. VAT II, LG, 34, 36, 41; GS, 4).

Those members of the Church who are stricken by infirmities, illnesses, poverty or misfortunes, or who are persecuted for the love of justice, are invited to unite their sorrows to the suffering of Christ in such a way that they not only satisfy more thoroughly the precept of penitence but also obtain for the brethren a life of grace and for themselves that beatitude which is promised in the Gospel to those who suffer (cf. VAT II, LG, 41).

50. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 18.

51. H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *A Short Primer for Unsettled Laymen*, trans. of *Kleine Fibel für verunsicherte Laien* by M. T. Skerry, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1985, 25-27: *The vertical and the horizontal cross only in the Cross of Christ: only in him is the dedication to mankind perfectly one with the immediate contact with the Father's will. Why? Because the will of God for*

which Christ listens in prayer sends him always anew into the world and its distress, not with merely human programs, but with a plan of salvation that can be thought and realized only by God.

52. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 11.
53. Cf. VATICAN II, *Gaudium et spes*, 41.
54. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 3.
55. I. GIORDANI, *St. Paul Apostle and Martyr*, St. Paul Editions, Boston, 244: *Paul lives the life of Christ crucified; in Christ he dies, yearning to be dissolved and to be with Him. Christ gives not only the gift of faith but the gift of suffering. The life of the Christian is an exercise of faith and pain; that is, of warfare, for in persecution [or whatever other form of suffering] the Christian is a soldier who must fight; indeed, he is to resist and defeat the prince of this world, Satan with all of his satellites. Thus, if any man is saved through faith, he is associated in a sense with the work of Redemption, fruit of the sufferings of Christ. Therefore, man must be associated with suffering. If the Mystical Body, the Church, suffers, it is Christ who suffers; and the Christian who willingly accepts suffering helps to accumulate for the Church the fruits of the Passion of Christ.*
56. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 26.
57. Cf. *Ibidem*, 2.
58. S. TERESA DE JESÚS, *Santa Teresa de Jesús, Obras Completas*, 3d ed., Ed. de Espiritualidad, Madrid, 1984, 113.
59. T. DUBAY, *Fire Within*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1989, 126, citing from St. Teresa's *Way of Perfection*, Doubleday and Co., New York, 1964, chap. 32, 215; and *The Collected Works of St. Teresa*, vol. I, trans. by K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez, ICS Publications, Washington D. C., 1976, no. 6, 162.
60. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 19.
61. Cf. VATICAN II, *Gaudium et spes*, 41.
62. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 19.
63. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem*, 41.
64. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 19; cf. Encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem*, 41.
65. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 26.
66. Cf. S. TERESA OF AVILA, Sixth Mansion, ch 106, in *Ibidem*.
67. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 215.
68. JOHN PAUL II, *Angelus*, Mar 4, 1979.
69. S. THOMAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 94, 4.
70. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem*, 14.
71. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Address *Theology and Truth*, June 23 1984, trans. *L'Osservatore Romano*, in *The Pope Speaks*, vol. 29, no 4, 1984, 338-339; Cf. CCC, 215-217, 2465-2474.
72. John Paul II, Encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem*, 14.
73. Cf. *The work of the Redemption Is Accomplished in Suffering*, address from the Lourdes Grotto in the Vatican Gardens to invalids of the Pope John XXIII Association, 22 May, 1979; *The Suffering, in the Likeness of Christ, Share in the Redemption*, angelus address, St. Peter's Square, 8 March, 1981;



*Suffering Can Enrich the Individual and the Whole Church*, address at paraliturgical ceremony, Southwark Cathedral, England, 28 May, 1982; *The Fullest Sign of God's Love*, homily at Eucharist, Arizona State University, USA, 14 September, 1987.

74. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 53: The Lord addresses his call to each and every one. Even the sick are sent forth as laborers into the Lord's vineyard: the weight that wearies the body's members and dissipates the soul's serenity is far from dispensing a person from working in the vineyard. Instead the sick are called to live their human and Christian vocation and to participate in the growth of the Kingdom of God in a new *and even more valuable manner*. The words of the Apostle Paul ought to become their approach to life, or better yet cast an illumination to permit them to see the meaning of grace in their very situation: *In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the Church* (Col 1: 24)... A handicapped person expressed these sentiments in a presentation in the Synod hall: *It is very important to make clear that Christians who live in situations of illness, pain and old age are called by God not only to unite their sufferings to Christ's Passion but also to receive in themselves now, and to transmit to others, the power of renewal and the joy of the risen Christ* (cf. 2 Cor 4: 10-11; 1 Pt 4: 13; Rom 8: 18 *et seq.*).
75. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 20.
76. Cf. *Ibidem*, 19.
77. *Ibidem*, 24.
78. *Ibidem*.
79. Cf. VATICAN II, *Lumen gentium*, Chapter 5.
80. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 24.
81. VATICAN II, *Gaudium et spes*, 41.
82. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 27:  
The discovery of the salvific meaning of suffering in union with Christ transforms [us].... Faith in sharing in the suffering of Christ brings with it the interior certainty that the suffering person *completes what is lacking in Christ's afflictions*; the certainty that in the spiritual dimension of the work of Redemption he is serving, like Christ, the salvation of his brothers and sisters. Therefore, he is carrying out an irreplaceable service. In the Body of Christ, which is ceaselessly born of the cross of the Redeemer, it is precisely suffering permeated by the spirit of Christ's sacrifice that is the irreplaceable mediator and author of the good things which are indispensable for the world's salvation. It is suffering more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption. In that *cosmic* struggle between the spiritual powers of good and evil, spoken of in the letter to the Ephesians (cf. Eph 6: 12), human sufferings, united to the redemptive suffering of Christ, constitute a special support for the powers of good, and open the way to the victory of these salvific powers.  
And so the Church sees in all Christ's suffering brothers and sisters as it were a *multiple subject of His supernatural power*.



83. S. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Jerusalem Catechesis*, 13, 1. 3. 6. 23: PG 33, 771-774, 779, 802.
84. S. JOHN OF THE CROSS, *Spiritual Cantic*, (Red. B, str. 36-37) in the *Liturgy of the Hours*, Vol. I, ICEL trans., Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 1975, 1246-1247.
85. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, 8.
86. *Ibidem*.
87. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem*, 39.
88. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 27.





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